Wireless Local Loop Project

1861. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been invited to the news-item appearing in 'The Financial Express' dated June 30,1996 captioned "Dot's Rs. 350 crore wireless local loop project European lobby's tactics outbid hi-tech";

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto, and

(c) the consideration weighed in this virtual sell-off to the European multinationals and the nature of new sophisticated technology likely to be provided to the customer?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Sir, there is no Rs. 350 crore wireless local loop project as referred in the news item.

(b) Not applicable.

(c) Specifications framed by the department are generic in nature and do favour any particular technology. Thus, the question of "virtual sell-off" to any particular vendor does not arise.

[Translation]

Pension Scheme

1862. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the number of names of recognised labour unions in the country,

(b) the number of unions which have accepted the pension scheme introduced by the Union Government, and

(c) the percentage of workers in the country who have adopted this pension scheme?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) 10 Central Trade Union Organisations have been consulted by the Ministry of Labour on various labour issues, including the pension scheme. Names of these organisations are, Indian National Trade Union Congress, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, United Trade Union Centre (LS), National Labour Organisation, All India Trade Union Congress, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, United Trade Union Congress, Trade Union Coordination Centre and National Front of Indian Trade Unions.

(b) and (c) Except the Centre of Indian Trade Unions and the United Trade Union Centre (LS), all the Central Trade Unions have generally supported the Employees' Pension Scheme. The Scheme is under implementation w.e.f. 16.11.95. As on 12.7.96, pension under the new Scheme has been distributed among 70,589 beneficiaries.

[English]

Air Hostess Medical Check up

1863. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether female air hostesses have to go for medical check up after attaining the age of 35 years;

(b) if so, whether there is no such condition in respect of male Pursers and Supervisors,

(c) if so, the reasons for such discrimination, and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (c) and (d) In Indian Airlines airhostesses and male cabin crew are required to undergo annual medical check up after attaining the age of 35 years.

In Air India only airhostesses have to appear for medical examination from the age of 37 years as they are entitled to avail of the benefit to retire at the age of 35 years. Male cabin crew are not required to undergo such test since they retire at the age of 58 years.

[Translation]

Development of Domestic Tourism

1864. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that due to apathy of the Government towards the places of tourist and historical importance having inspirational value in the country, the development of domestic tourism has been adversely affected,

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto,

(c) whether the Government have formulated any time bound scheme for the development of domestic tourism,

(d) if so, the details thereof,

(e) whether the Government propose to involve the private sector in the development of domestic tourism, and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA) : (a) to (d) Domestic Tourism is the mainstay of Indian Tourism. The Department of Tourism, Government of India, provides central financial assistance for construction of Tourist Complexes, Wayside Amenities, Tourist Bungalows, Yatri Niwas/Yatrikas, Tourist Reception Centres, Tented Accommodation and Pilgrim Centres to

State/Union Territory Governments for the development of Domestic Tourism.

(e) and (f). The private sector is already involved in the development of tourism infrastructure for domestic tourism.

[English]

Allocation of Wheat and Rice

1865. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem appearing in 'Indian Express' dated 18 March, 1996 that States like Bengal, Maharashtra, etc. were starving of their allotted quota of wheat and rice resulting in hardhitting suffering to the poorer sections of the population who draw their sustenance from Public Distribution System while nation's granaries in Punjab and Haryana were overflowing;

(b) the facts thereof, and the names of all the officers of Food Corporation of India responsible for such an acute shortage of essential supplies in various parts of the country; and

(c) the action taken by the Government against these officials?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (c). The newsitem appeared in the Indian Express dated 18.3.1996 was seen by the Government. As the stocks of foodgrains in the Central Pool continued to be comfortable, there had been no difficulty in supplying wheat and rice to the States/UTs including West Bengal, Maharashtra etc. for PDS during 95-96. The average monthly offtake of rice and wheat for PDS/RPDS in West Bengal and Maharashtra in year 1995-96 was as under :

(In lakh tonnes)

State	Rice	Wheat	Total
West Bengal	0.37	0.70	1.07
Maharashtra	0.30	0.51	0.81
All India	7.88	4.41	12.29

As against the lifting of rice and wheat indicated above, the stocks held by FCI on different dates were as under :

(In lakh tonnes)

	West Bengal		Maharashtra		All India (Central Pool)	
Date	Rice	Wheat	Rice	Wheat	Rice	Wheat
1.4.95	3.61	0.96	8.04	5.82	180.0	87.2
1.10.95	3.81	1.16	6.51	4.57	130.0	169.5
1.1.96	3.45	0.52	5.46	3.23	154.0	131.5
1.2.96	3.76	0.63	5.35	3.01	160.8	114.9
1.3.96	3.73	0.74	5.48	2.83	161.8	99.4
1.4.96	3.41	0.72	5.32	2.85	141.4	86.0
1.5.96	3.14	0.87	5.38	2.76	137.4	122.4
1.6.96	2.95	1.13	5.02	2.66	135.4	152.3

(All Figures Provisional)

The stocks of rice and wheat in the country stood higher than the requirements for PDS. The same position generally prevailed in Maharashtra and West Bengal. However in January, 96 and February, 1996 the stock of wheat in West Bengal on the first day of the month was a little lower than the average monthly offtake in the state. There were some movement constraints affecting the stock position during a few months after September, 1995 in the Mumbai City and Calcutta Metropolitan Areas. This was mainly due to lesser availability of railway rakes due to heavy passenger traffic in Mumbai Areas and difficulty on the part of Calcutta Port Trust to accept rakes from the Eastern Railways for placement at Jinjra Pool (JJP) godown of FCI in Calcutta Port Trust Area. The situation has improved since then.

In the aforesaid context, there seems to be no scope for fixing responsibility on any FCI officers.

Tourism Offices Abroad

1866. SHRI SARAT PATTANAYAK : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) the number of offices abroad operating for the promotion of tourism;